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UNCLAS LIMA 000017

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR WHA/AND, EB/TRA, CA/OCS/ACS  
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SUBJECT: TANS AIRLINES - ONLY 11 DAYS LEFT TO FLY

REF: 05 LIMA 3665

11. (SBU) Summary. After several months of reassessing Peruvian Air Force-owned TANS Airlines after the August crash that killed 43, the Ministry of Transport and the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGAC) on January 1 suspended TANS' flight permissions, not for maintenance and safety reasons or for a near collision with a LAN Peru 767 on December 31, but rather for noise violations. A DGAC contact informed us that, under recently enacted sound regulations, none of the four TANS aircraft meet the new standards. While the DGAC technically suspended permits on all four TANS planes, the Ministry of Transport has allowed one plane to continue flying until January 15. After January 15, TANS will cease commercial operations. People who purchased tickets for TANS flights after January 15 will be able to use AeroCondor or Star Peru flights. End Summary.

12. (SBU) After several months of reassessing TANS Airline's safety records after the fatal August 23 crash (Ref A), the DGAC on January 1 rescinded flight permits for all four TANS aircraft. Although the DGAC has been hinting for months that it was going to shut down TANS due to safety concerns, the DGAC instead used the recently passed Ministry of Transport sound regulation as the reason to annul TANS' authorization. (Note: Just one day before the DGAC rescinded TANS' flight permits, one of the aircraft had a near collision with a LAN Peru 767 in Lima. No one was injured, but the DGAC is conducting an investigation of the TANS pilot's actions. End Note.)

13. (SBU) According to a close DGAC contact, none of the TANS planes are in compliance with Stage III engine emissions and sound requirements, which are modeled after FAA regulations. The planes will be grounded until they meet these standards. The DGAC asserts that TANS will have to pay up to up to \$1 million to retrofit each engine, which is unlikely given that TANS has lost over \$8 million in the past five years.

14. (SBU) Our DGAC contact also informed us that, despite rescinding flight permits, the Ministry of Transport has allowed TANS to continue flying one Boeing 737 until January 15. The lone plane will fly alternate routes in an effort to cover the majority of TANS' domestic routes. Those who have already purchased tickets for TANS flights after January 15 will be able to redeem them for flights on either Aero Condor or Star Peru.

15. (SBU) Comment. While we expected the DGAC to withdraw TANS' flight permissions, we were surprised that the DGAC used sound regulations as a justification rather than safety and maintenance concerns. Although TANS may be grounded for the foreseeable future, we understand that the Peruvian Air Force is looking to lease planes that are in compliance with the new regulations. The DGAC's actions may be an attempt to show that the agency is serious about aviation safety before the FAA's International Aviation Safety Assessment (IASA) in mid-January. End Comment.

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